

Notes on some British Chrysomelidae (Col.)
including Amendments and Additions to the List

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1. *Lema septentrionis* Weise (= *erichsoni* Th., nec Suffr.).—The reluctance of some authorities to accept this as a good species distinct from *L. erichsoni* Suffr. is quite extraordinary, when one considers how entomological hairs are so freely split and “species” “created” at the lowest limits of recognisability. No one who had examined the two insects side by side could well feel any doubt on the matter; not only the shape of elytra and colour of thorax, but also—perhaps most evident of all—strength of elytral punctures, especially on the apical half, clearly and constantly differ. No integrading occurs, and the distribution-patterns are quite distinct with only partial overlap. Most of the specific characters were noted by Weise himself (1880), by Champion² (1897), and by Fowler & Donisthorpe (1913: 161-2). However, as Mohr (1966: 112) points out at the head of his key to the genus, the Fennoscandian Catalogue of 1960, following some earlier authors, makes the two species once again conspecific—an error repeated by certain writers since that date. Mohr himself was clearly hesitant about the correctness of this view which he provisionally accepts, for, having given the distinctions very fully and added a new one relating to the aedeagus (which surely ought to clinch the matter) he nevertheless cites Weise's insect as “*erichsoni*? var. *septentrionis* Weise” (pp. 112-3). Hence the need for the present note, which it is hoped will put an end to further vacillation. Earlier attempts to make the species a “melanic” form of the common *L. melanopa* L. have rightly been abandoned—though it must be allowed that in both shape and puncturation of elytra *septentrionis* is much nearer to *melanopa* than to *erichsoni*.

As the few known British *erichsoni* with data have all been taken, singly, on the south coast (Kent, Sussex, Devon), the species may be only an occasional immigrant to this country which fails to breed. It is remarkable that *septentrionis*, with its much more restricted Continental range (N. Germany, Sweden, etc.), is limited in the Britannic area to Ireland, where it is widespread and far from uncommon; among Irish insects, therefore, it belongs to the more-or-less boreal as opposed to the Lusitanian faunal group. This, again, would go to show (were further proof needed) that we are concerned with separate species.

The question of foodplant seems not to have been cleared up. Both beetles are recorded, apparently, from “a species of *Nasturtium*” (cf. Champion, Mohr *et al.*, *supra*). But Mohr attributes this datum to *erichsoni*, probably because of his treatment of *septentrionis* as a variety; which disguises the fact that the citation of *Nasturtium* (?going back to Weise)

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² Champion, in bringing forward *septentrionis* as British, referred our *erichsoni* to a form of it; but this was corrected in Fowler & Donisthorpe (pp. 161-2).

really pertains to the latter insect only. In any case, however, that plant-genus is most unlikely to be the true host, for the large section of *Lema* which includes these species is thought to be entirely graminivorous; and I have little doubt that, in face of the occurrence of *septentrionis* plentifully with its larvae on young shoots of oats in Ireland (Johnson & Halbert, 1902), the earlier datum is erroneous and should be discounted.

2. *Clytra* (= *Clythra* auct.) *laeviuscula* Ratz.—Included as doubtfully British by Fowler (1890: 286), who writes: "Mr. Crotch introduced the species on the authority of two old specimens without locality which he found mixed with *C. quadripunctata*; the species requires confirmation before it can be regarded as indigenous." It has long been dropped from our catalogues, but I believe that just enough evidence can now be mustered to meet that requirement.

In a letter dated 23.iv.61, the late D. K. Kevan informed me that the Royal Scottish Museum at Edinburgh possessed two old specimens of *C. laeviuscula*, *ex colls.* Greville and Chappell, without data and recently separated by him (D.K.K.) from the series of *C. 4-punctata* L. (These last facts make it barely conceivable that they are the same two detected long ago by Crotch; those might possibly be in the latter's collection at Cambridge.) Greville is known to have collected mostly in Scotland, Chappell in the Manchester district. What is more significant, Murray's *Catalogue of the Coleoptera of Scotland* (1853: 93) includes *C. laeviuscula* (with the synonym *4-punctata* Laich. not Lin., Fab.), giving the Black Forest, Rannoch, as the locality (*leg.* Nelson). This appears to constitute the first definite mention of a locality for the species in our literature, and it is strange indeed that Fowler wholly ignores it, considering that he often cites Murray's catalogue. Thus it is quite possible that the Greville example was taken at Rannoch, though there is no shred of proof.

We come now to a very interesting and seemingly better authenticated record, largely overlooked, which certainly needs attention drawn to it. In *The Guests of British Ants* (1927b) Donisthorpe writes under *C. laeviuscula* (p. 62): "Although it is now omitted from our list, the living larva with its case was found by Hamm crawling on the hillside at Streatley in October, 1895"; and continues, "Rouget found this species with *F. sanguinea* in France, and Wasmann records it with *A. (D.) niger* and *A. (D.) alienus* in Bosnia. The larval cases in different species of *Clythra* are quite distinct. Thus the case of *C. laeviuscula* is smoother than that of *C. 4-punctata* and does not possess the longitudinal ridges present in the latter". Donisthorpe cites no previous publication of this remarkable find, nor have I come across any; the fact that it is not in Fowler & Donisthorpe (1913) strongly suggests that it had not been published, which surely is strange, but Hamm's reputation as a careful observer and recorder speaks for its genuineness. The locality, on the Berkshire Chilterns, is a very favourable place for rarities.

I am aware of only one other piece of evidence bearing on the issue, and that is an intriguing (but tantalisingly brief) note in Vol. 1 of the *Ent. mon. Mag.* (1864: 51) in the Notice of Exhibits at the Entomological Society of London's meeting on June 6th of that year: "Mr. McLachlan exhibited a case-bearing larva, which had been found by Mr. Douglas on Box Hill [Surrey] amongst thyme; it was of so singular an aspect that he felt quite uncertain to what order it should be referred. Professor Westwood pronounced it to be Coleopterous, of the genus *Clythra* . . ." Now this larva could scarcely have belonged to *C. 4-punctata*, since that species seems to be always associated in Britain with the Wood Ant (*Formica rufa* agg.)—an ant surely most unlikely to live in the situation mentioned; at any rate I have never met with it on any of my many visits there. On the other hand the similarity of the terrain to "the hillside at Streatley", where Hamm found his larva, is immediately obvious; while *Lasius niger* and *alienus*—recorded hosts of *laeviuscula*—both inhabit Box Hill. I suggest therefore that (assuming Westwood to have been correct in his generic diagnosis) Douglas's larva most likely belonged to the last-named species. It is, however, certainly a pity that neither larva seems to have been reared through to the adult.

The above considerations are, I think, sufficient to justify the reinstatement of this beetle as a British insect—albeit one of our rarest, if indeed it still survives. The pair of very distant localities, Rannoch and the Chilterns, has an interesting parallel in another great rarity in the same section of the family, viz. *Cryptocephalus primarius* Har., which has been found in the same two areas (and only one or two other places). The occurrence of the *Clytra* in two biotopes so different as a southern chalkhill and a Caledonian pine-and-birch wood could be due to the variety of ants with which it is associated (cf. Donisthorpe, *l.c. supra*); *Formica sanguinea*, one of its hosts, occurs at Rannoch (*id.*, 1927 a: 325).

3. *Phaedon regnianus* Tott.—(The rule of gender agreement requires the termination *-us*, not *-um* as originally written and hitherto used; *Phaedon* being masculine³, cf. *P. tumidulus*, *P. concinnus*.) The precise taxonomic status of this form is difficult to decide; it was described on two specimens admitted to be very near to *P. cochleariae* (Tottenham, 1941: 14). Though still little known and seemingly not recognised outside England, it is now on record from a few localities on the south and east coasts (Sussex, Kent, Essex, Yorks., etc.). I possess a short series from the Thames marshes mostly taken by the late Dr. A. M. Massee near Higham, and once swept a few in a small saltmarsh at Stoke, near the estuary (2.vi.70).

I have been unable thus far to detect, for certain, the slight morphological distinctions from *P. cochleariae* noted by its describer, which he admits are very comparative; they include two points in which the aedeagus is said to differ. It

³ From a classical personal name; the root means "shining, brilliant". The trivial name from Regnia, the Roman settlement which became Chichester.

may be that these structural characters, if they do exist, are somewhat variable. The substantial differences are matters of colouration and ecology. The colour constantly differs, without apparent overlap: *regnianus* ranges from a dark coppery to brassy-black, without even a hint of the strong blue of *cochleariae*. Moreover, *P. regnianus* lives on a saltmarsh plant, probably *Cochlearia* (scurvy-grass) like *P. concinnus*; while *cochleariae* is a beetle of freshwater marshes and riversides, affecting mostly *Nasturtium* spp. Thus the two insects occupy separate territories and could only seldom meet and interbreed, and the present one is doubtless well on the way to becoming an independent species—if indeed that state is not yet fully attained. Whether it should be so treated or not must be a matter of opinion at present, at least until the question is thoroughly sifted. Probably it is more correct to maintain *regnianus* in specific rank as hitherto; but if a lower taxon is preferred, it should, I consider, stand as a subspecies and not a mere synonym of *P. cochleariae*.

4. *Phaedon concinnus* Steph.—In the Check List (1st ed., p. 203) this species is relegated to the rank of a variety of *P. armoraciae* L., a point definitely calling for amendment. This erroneous course was followed for a long time by German authors—notably Weise (1884) and after him Reitter (e.g. 1912: 134). However, as long ago as 1892 Bedel had recognised its distinctness in opposition to the categorical statement of Weise that “under no circumstances” (Sharp’s words) could it be so considered; whilst Sharp (1910: 4-6) demonstrated beyond cavil the correctness of Bedel’s view, pointing out, among other things, differences in the aedeagi of the three species *armoraciae*, *concinnus* and *cochleariae*. It is hard, therefore, to see why Kloet & Hincks—or some other author whose treatment they followed—reverted to the old mistake. Admittedly, German coleopterists have been very slow to relinquish it, for only as late as 1954 was *concinnus* at last recognised as a good species in their country (Lohse, 1954: 209-210). It is noteworthy that Lohse, working with North German material and unaware of Sharp’s paper, arrived at exactly the same conclusions as the British author, expressing very understandable surprise that the contrary opinion had so long prevailed and suggesting that Reitter could not have seen a genuine specimen of Stephens’ insect. In a useful comparative table of the three species, Lohse (p. 210) shows that *concinnus* stands between the other two (indeed certain authors have attempted to equate it with *cochleariae*). Both he and Mohr (1966: 176) figure the aedeagus of all three.

The species under notice varies more widely in colour than any other British *Phaedon*, from bright reddish-copper (lighter and more brilliant than *P. regnianus*) through green to blue and even violet (the last rarely). Blue specimens resemble *cochleariae* superficially, but the dark steel-blue or nigro-aeaneous tint of the non-halophil *armoraciae* appears to be seldom—Sharp says never—found in the halophil *concinnus*.

5. *Phyllotreta cruciferae* Goeze. — Here again, for some reason, what most authors have classed as a species, *P. cruciferae*, is demoted in the Check List (p. 204) to a variety of its nearest ally *P. atra* F. However, it is quite certain that they are truly separate species; indeed some writers—e.g. Hansen (1927)—do not even compare or contrast them. Besides the most obvious difference, viz. the absence of a metallic lustre in *atra*, there are two good aedeagal characters. One is given by Mohr (pp. 212, 213 and fig. 14a)—a fine but clear transverse strigosity on the median dorsal area of the lobe in *atra* but not in *cruciferae*, readily seen under a fairly high power. The other, revealed by a sample of my material, concerns the form of the extreme apex: in *atra* blunt, obtusely rounded or subtruncate, in *cruciferae* terminating in a minute but quite evident point or acumen. In Mohr's figure of the *atra* aedeagus the apex is more pointed, and the whole organ less elongate, than in my examples.

6. *Phyllotreta hintoni* Donis. — Described on two female specimens from Lampton, Middlesex (Donisthorpe, 1944a). I have for long regarded this as identical with the not uncommon *P. consobrina* Curt., an opinion first expressed, I believe, many years ago by my friend Dr. A. M. Easton; and further study, including re-examination of the types, has convinced me of its correctness. Minor variations of a quite ordinary kind would seem to have given rise to the idea of a new species (and similarly in that next to be noted—No. 7). *P. hintoni* was described as nearest to *P. aerea* All. (= *punctulata* Marsh.), but the figure of its antenna practically proves it to be *consobrina* since these organs are characteristic in the latter species, even in the ♀ (robust build, especially about the base, in comparison with its allies; long thick basal segment much curved and almost angled outwardly; entirely black 2nd and 3rd segments and strongly elongate 5th, etc.; all just as described and figured for *hintoni*).

7. *Aphthona aeneomicans* All.—Added to our list by Donisthorpe (1944b) on a pair from the same place as the last, which he had identified from an example of Allard's species sent by Heikertinger (the Halticine specialist) to the British Museum. He also stated that the description of *aeneomicans* agreed "sufficiently well" with both the latter specimen and his own, but admitted that there were slight differences. The most obvious point in which this species differs from its nearest ally in Britain, *A. euphorbiae* Schk., lies in the metallic reflection which is dark bronze instead of blackish-green; but the aedeagus too is characteristic.

The only other mention of the present species in our literature, apparently, is an incidental but very telling one in a note by the late W. D. Hincks (1950: 224) on *A. euphorbiae*. He writes, regarding some Yorkshire examples that he had thought might be *aeneomicans*: "During a recent visit to Vienna I . . . took the opportunity of showing specimens to Dr. Heikertinger who kindly determined them as the common

and very widely distributed *A. euphorbiae*. He further . . . gave me a specimen of the very rare *A. aeneomicans* and expressed the opinion that it was very unlikely to occur in Britain as being well outside its known range." It should be noted that at the time of Donisthorpe's captures, *A. euphorbiae* (like *Longitarsus parvulus* Payk.) was abnormally abundant over large areas of the country.

Since then I have examined the Lampton insects and have no hesitation in referring them to *A. euphorbiae*; in fact they appear fairly typical, and I could not detect the bronzy tint that was supposed to mark them. (Some slight colour-change in the course of time is perhaps not excluded, though surely most unusual with metallic hues unless due to grease.) This, combined with the implications of Hincks's note, would seem to make almost inescapable the conclusion that *A. aeneomicans* was misrecorded as British.

(To be continued)

PHYLLONORYCTER ULICICOLELLA (STAINTON) IN HAMPSHIRE.

— Mr. D. W. H. Ffennell took a single specimen of this moth at Wickham Common in 1972, and on 5th and 6th of June, 1976 I found several flying around gorse bushes in this locality. Presumably it is under-recorded for lack of searching, and the extreme difficulty, not to say discomfort, of looking for the mines on the stems of its alleged foodplant. — JOHN R. LANGMAID, 38 Cumberland Court, Festing Road, Southsea, Hampshire.

UNUSUAL CAPTURES IN SUFFOLK IN 1976. — I don't know whether it is the result of the recent dry weather, but I have been seeing some most unusual specimens of moths recently, nearly all taken in my m.v. moth trap. I should like to know what other collectors of macrolepidoptera have experienced.

The main examples are as follows: Tiny specimens of the Oak Hook-tip (*Drepana binaria* Hufn.) and July Highflyer (*Hydriomena furcata* Thun.). The former with wing expanse only 18 mm. A very large Poplar Hawk (*Laothoe populi* L.) of most unusual colour with almost white head and base of forewings and wing expanse 3.7 inches. Several Lappets (*Gastopacha quercifolia* L.), all males, of a lighter brown colour than I have ever seen in about the last 40 years. The most numerous moth in the trap recently has been the Dusky Sallow (*Eremobia ochroleuca* D. & S.). The Suffolk Naturalists' Society in its report printed in 1937 states that as far as I can understand it, the sole specimens taken after 1890 were a few in the Breck area in August 1928. If any collector would like some specimens of the Dusky Sallow, I would gladly send them to him. Finally, I have only seen one specimen of the Varied Coronet (*Hadena compta* D. & S.), which until this year has been quite numerous. — REV. GUY A. FORD, The Rookery, Farm House, Norton, Bury St. Edmunds, 23.vii.76.